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WHY FORGIVE?

There isn't a person alive that hasn't been hurt by someone. Those hurts, called wounds, can penetrate deep into your soul. Many times, they fester inside a person and become roots of bitterness.

When we are hurt or wounded, we have a choice, to let it go or let it grow. One day Jesus was approached by Peter in Matthew 18:21 and was asked, **"...Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?"** You know how it was, Peter and John had a bit of rivalry, and they had "issues" between them. One issue was who should sit at Jesus' right hand when he established his kingdom. If we are honest, we all have that "person" who just gets under our skin and irritates us. It might be with a word, or a look, or a deed, but they just "get to us." This was how it was with Peter.

I am sure he had hoped Jesus would say something like, Well, Peter, I know how John gets to you, and I will deal with him, and make him stop. Instead, Jesus came back with a statement that would make each of us lower our eyes in self-examination. He said, in verse 22, **"...I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, until seventy times seven."**

Seventy times seven? Four hundred and ninety times? Wow, Jesus, that just doesn't seem fair. But the principle is that we have to be unlimited with our forgiveness lest it takes hold of us. Some versions say that it was four hundred ninety times in one day! Imagine that? That would be over 20 times an hour or every three minutes. Now that is a lot of forgiveness!

Jesus knows what happens when we don't forgive. It grows into a root of bitterness that is so difficult to get rid of. In another passage in Mark 11:26 Jesus said, **"But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses."** No one would want that to happen! It isn't worth losing your being forgiven over not forgiving someone else.

We must examine our hearts daily and see if there are any "roots" of unforgiveness growing in our lives. If there are, we must pull them out by confessing them to God. Then we will be free. It doesn't matter how small or big the offense is, it has to be dealt with to be right with God. In letting go of these things we are freed up and can receive forgiveness from God.

In I John 1:9 it says, **"If we confess our sins (not forgiving is a sin), he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."** If you have something that you are harboring, then let it go today so you can be free.